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TIMES PHOTO BY TONY BARNARD

"Wings" passes from Paramount's Michael Eisner to Academy President Fay Kanin. Buddy Rogers looks on.

'WINGS' FINDS A HOME AT THE ACADEMY

By DALE POLLOCK
Times Staff Writer

"Wings" finally came to roost Thursday at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences, the organization that gave the film its first Academy Award for best picture in 1927.

Paramount Pictures President Michael D. Eisner presented three silver film cans containing a new, restored version of the classic to Academy President Fay Kanin in a brief ceremony at the Academy's Margaret Herrick Library.

Also participating was Charles (Buddy) Rogers, who co-starred in the silent film with Clara Bow, Richard Arlen and a very young Gary Cooper.

Rogers, husband of the late Mary Pickford, joked that he was the only man working on the film who didn't know how to fly an airplane. "Wings" was revolutionary in its depiction of aerial warfare, stemming from director William (Wild Bill) Wellman's World War I duty with the Lafayette Flying Squadron. Crouched next to Rogers, unseen by the camera while he piloted the aircraft, was Hoyt S. Vandenberg, who later became a five-star general and had an Air Force base named after him.

Rogers confided that winning an Academy Award in 1927 meant a luncheon and a little scroll, "and that was it." Cedric Gibbons did not design the gold-plated Oscar figure until the following year, and Rogers said it always nettled Mary Pickford that her husband had never received his own Oscar.

"For a gag," he recalled, "she once had a tiny copy made, and gave it to me in my own private, elaborate ceremony."

"Wings" now becomes part of the Academy's film archives.

From left, Buddy Rogers, Clara Bow and Richard Arlen in 1927's "Wings," the first Oscar winner.

'NOT JOB': LIFE IN A SANTA SUIT

By DAN SULLIVAN
Times Theater Critic

And now for something completely different. Glenn Hopkins' "Not Job" has been described as "the weirdest Christmas play in the world." It's certainly original.

Its early moments forecast disaster. The set is a plywood doghouse in front of two painted flats. The overture is a tape of someone playing "When the Red Red Robin Comes Bob-Bob-Bobbin' Along" on the piano, not too well. The characters seem to be a talking dog and cat, and Santa Claus, ho-ho-ho.

However, this is merely a prologue. And not the last one. The real story, when we arrive at it, concerns the young man inside the Santa Claus suit. He is a struggling actor dividing his time these days between playing Santa at a shopping mall and in an avant-garde play that he has no faith in.

His personal life involves woman problems, man problems and God problems. (God talks to him from the ceiling, and sometimes talks to us.) Now and then, there is an earthquake. In the end, we see that part of it has been a dream, but how much isn't absolutely sure.

Structurally, "Not Job" has a disturbingly random feeling, as if we were sharing a dream not with its characters but with its author. But I stayed with it. Hopkins can draw people and knows how a conversation is transacted. He can give you a divorced husband trying to be nice to his ex-wife on the phone, or two guys talking about nothing in a car, or a woman visiting another woman in the hospital without anything to say to her.

Odd, how the realist here corrects the fantasist. Hopkins' imagination may not be his strong point as a playwright at all, for all the eccentricity of this script. It is acted with point and believability, by the way—Michael Nissman as the divided hero; George Semaniego as his Chicano buddy; Glenn Miller (really?) as his aggressive woman director; Pat Specks as his female lover; David Fero as his male lover. No, Virginia, it is not for children.

Performances at 8 tonight and Sunday, and Friday-Dec. 21 at Channing Hall, 2936 West 8th Street, just east of Vermont. 399-0011.

BUDAPEST SOLOISTS FOR BARTOK

FOSTER CONDUCTS 'BLUEBEARD'

By MARTIN BERNHEIMER
Times Music Critic

The posters and the program credits tell us that Lawrence Foster and the Los Angeles Philharmonic are performing "Duke Bluebeard's Castle" this week.

They are and they aren't.

They are indeed giving us a concert performance of Bela Bartok's only opera, the work Zoltan Kodaly described quite aptly as "a musical volcano erupting for 60 minutes of tragic intensity."

But they aren't giving it to us in the language implied by the title. This, emphatically, is "*A kekszakallu herceg vara*." The language of the evening is Hungarian, and the two soloists—both making American debuts—were imported for the occasion from Budapest.

The decision to enforce linguistic authenticity has assets as well as liabilities.

There can be no denying that Bartok's vocal writing is closely predicated on the rhythms and contours of the original text. Moreover, the Hungarian singers selected, singers who are impeccably schooled in the musical and dramatic idioms involved, could hardly be expected to articulate the standard English translation.

On the other hand, Bartok did not exactly write the sort of opera that invites an innocent audience to sit back, relax and enjoy the pretty melodies. Bela Balazs' libretto twists the familiar tale into a poetic-symbolist allegory in which the cruel duke is no longer wicked and his erstwhile victims are no longer martyrs. Appreciation of the music—a complex fusion of conversational recitative, dissonant shimmer and climactic expansion—is irrevocably dependent upon some comprehension of the text.

The Philharmonic management might have avoided the losses inherent in translation and minimized the confusion imposed by the language barrier by printing the libretto together with a word-for-word translation in the program magazine. That was the solution chosen when the orchestra gave its only previous performance of the work back in 1968 (with Zubin Mehta, Christa Ludwig and Walter Berry). On this occasion, unfortuantely, the program offered only a plot synopsis. It wasn't enough.

Under the circumstances, those unfamiliar with the opera had to strain to savor its impact. The potential impact, nevertheless was considerable.

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POP BEAT

PUNK ROCKER WAS THE 'OTHER' DEATH

By TERRY ATKINSON

John Lennon wasn't the only rock artist who died this week. But Darby Crash's death was more in keeping with the stereotype of rock 'n' roll excesses.

Crash, founder of the archetypal L.A. punk band the Germs, died of a heroin overdose at a girlfriend's Wilshire district house some time last Sunday morning, according to police. Acquaintances say that Crash had entered into a double-suicide pact with the woman. He took a much larger dose than she did—perhaps three-fourths of the reported $400 buy made late Saturday night.

In a note, Crash is said to have bequeathed the leather jacket he was wearing to a friend and left an undisclosed message. The woman survived. Crash, whose real name was Jan Paul Beahm, was 22. His funeral was Friday.

□

"Nobody, absolutely nobody can even attempt to do what the Germs do," wrote Slash magazine, the monthly paper that has kept tabs on the L.A. scene better than anyone. "Live, the band ranges from an ugly mess to explosions of musical brilliance."

Darby Crash wrote the lyrics and sang with the Germs from its formation in April, 1977, until its break-up six months ago. Though influenced by such punk pioneers as Iggy Pop and the Sex Pistols, the quartet soon blazed its own cyclonic trail through L.A.'s clubs.

The Germs recorded an album in 1979 for Slash Records that has sold roughly 10,000 copies. The group also had three tracks on the 1979 compilation album "Tooth and Nail" and two songs on the sound track of the controversial film "Cruising." For the most part, though, the band's impact was limited to L.A.'s chaotic new-music movement. In that area, the band was among the most important.

"As a songwriter, Darby rates with Jim Morrison," says critic Richard Meltzer, a close observer of the L.A. scene. "His was the largest body of work that was totally hard-core. It was all this scattergun demon stuff."

There was, in retrospect, some prophecy in Crash's primal scream: "*I came into this world like a puzzled panther/Waiting to be caged/But something stood in the way/I was never quite tamed . . . I've got this creature on my back/And it just won't let go.*"

□

Some of Crash's friends think his end was inevitable. Others can't understand, or even accept, the idea of a suicide.

"Darby knew what he was doing at all times," says Amber (she uses no last name), who became Crash's manager after the Germs disbanded. "He was very careful with drugs. He probably thought he'd come out of it. Sure, he'd get very depressed—he had to in order to write. He knew he was going to die young, but not *that* young."

A relative of Crash's, who asked not to be identified, does believe that he had suicide on his mind before the Germs' reunion/farewell show at the Starwood 10 days ago: "When the Germs played a couple of years ago, Darby enjoyed everything about it. That was his whole life. But now he really hates the crowds he gets—all the fights and everything. After a while, he knew that death was inevitable, and he told people he was going to die soon."

Says Don Bolles, the Germs' drummer, "Darby used to say things like, 'I won't be alive in a year' and things

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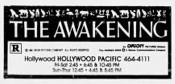
PHOTO BY ROBERT HILL

Darby Crash, founder of the Germs, was found dead of a reported heroin overdose Sunday.



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